

## Arms of the South Australian volunteers in the Permanent Force artillery at Albany, Western Australia 1893–1901

George B. Trotter

Education Section, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Cliff Street, Fremantle,  
Western Australia 6160, Australia

**Abstract** – A number of South Australian marked specimens of artillery pattern firearms and bayonets are examined and described. Evidence linking them to the South Australian volunteers who initially manned the Albany harbour defence artillery site in 1893 is discussed.

### INTRODUCTION

The defence of the various colonies established on the continent of Australia by Britain initially lay with Imperial troops stationed in the various colonies by the British crown. In the late 1850's, Britain announced the planned withdrawal of her troops from Australia by the early 1860's and the colonists thus became aware that defence would be their own responsibility thereafter. This announcement led to the establishment of numbers of volunteer colonial infantry, artillery and cavalry corps throughout the Australian colonies by the mid 1860's. A Defence Report prepared in 1881 recommended a number of coastal defences be built around Australia to guard against attack or invasion by a foreign power. With the evolution towards self government in the colonies, the concept of a joint colonial defence scheme emerged and the colonies agreed, in 1887, to jointly fund the cost of establishing and maintaining the series of harbour and coastal defence sites around Australia. This joint scheme was in reality a foreshadowing of the Federal defence structure which was soon to be established when Australia became a Commonwealth of States in 1901. Western Australia's defence site was to be artillery batteries situated in fortifications on Mt Adelaide which commanded the approaches to Princess Royal harbour in the port of Albany (King George III Sound), and Point King which controlled the entrance to the harbour. Construction of the forts commenced in 1891.

In accordance with the joint defence agreement the task of recruiting and training men to man the guns was undertaken by South Australia who provided a fully trained crew of artillerymen who had volunteered from the ranks of their military for Western Australian service. South Australia

already possessed up to date artillery and the means of training new crews. Two non-commissioned officers and 26 men were recruited in South Australia in 1892 and trained there at Fort Glanville before arriving in Albany on 28th February, 1893, under the command of Capt. J. C. Hawker and Sergeant-Major Hollingsworth<sup>1</sup>.

The regulations pertaining to the establishment of a Permanent Force of artillerymen, (and engineers), was announced in the Western Australian Government Gazette of 6th April, 1893.<sup>2</sup>

The regulations prescribed that the corps were to be known as the Western Australian Artillery (WAA), of the Western Australian Permanent Force (WAPF), or simply, Permanent Force (PF).

On 19th May, 1893 the Western Australian Government forwarded Colonial Joint Defence Account Indent No. 45 to London for the supply of all articles of uniform, kit, buttons and badges etc. to equip the Permanent Force Artillery. These articles were of standard Royal Artillery pattern and the helmet, shoulder and belt buckle insignia were apparently identical to the South Australian style, except that the word "Western" and the letter "W" replaced the word "South" and the letter "S" of the South Australia insignia. The indent included an order for two "Staff Sergeant's, RA" pattern swords, scabbards and knots and two revolvers, "Webley", with cases and ammunition pouches (see Figures 1 and 2). No arms for the 26 enlisted men were included in the order.<sup>3</sup>

The South Australians spent their initial months preparing the parade ground, clearing bush and undertaking the backbreaking task of mounting the guns. The men are shown on parade in a photograph (Figure 3), taken circa 1895, wearing the WAPF uniform. The photograph is probably one of the last taken of the Permanent Force while

<sup>1</sup> Martin, R., *A Sound Defence* Scott & Scott, Albany W.A. (n.d.). This booklet contains an interesting concise history of the Albany "Forts"

<sup>2</sup> Batty Library, W.A. Government Gazette, 6th April, 1893, p 347.

<sup>3</sup> Batty Library, C.S.O. Correspondence, Letters received, 840/93. Acc. 527.

5629—Swords, Staff-Sergeant's  
Scabbard, Staff-Sergeant's

27 Nov 1888

6075—Pistol, Webley (Mark I)  
B.L. revolver.

8 Nov 1887  
4 Jun 1888  
12 Jul 1890

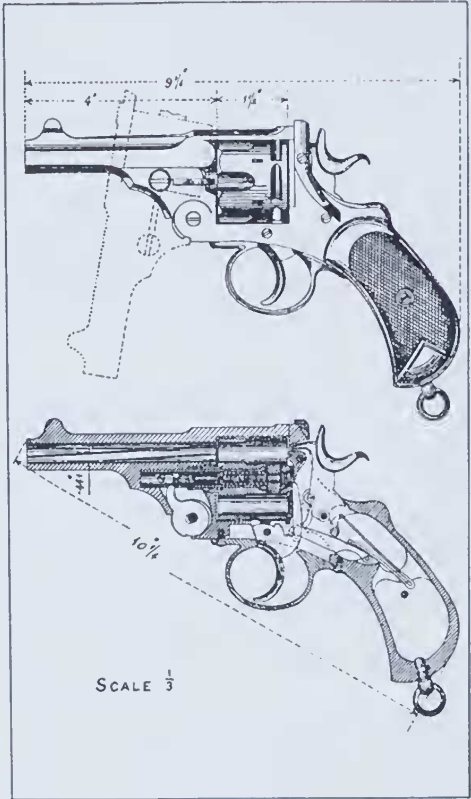
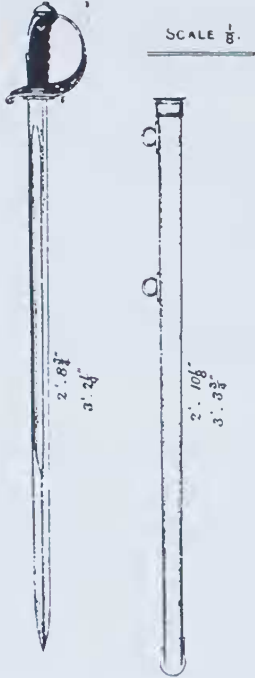


Figure 1 Staff Sergeant's sword and scabbard of the type purchased for the Permanent Force in 1893. (From the List of Changes in British war material).

it still included South Australians, as most of these men had left by 1896<sup>4</sup>. In the photograph the senior non-commissioned officer is wearing a sword and the men are armed with Martini-Henry Artillery Carbines and Pattern 1879 Artillery Sword

Figure 2 Webley revolver of the type purchased for the Permanent Force non-commissioned officers in 1893. (From the List of Changes in British war material).

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, Martin, p 27

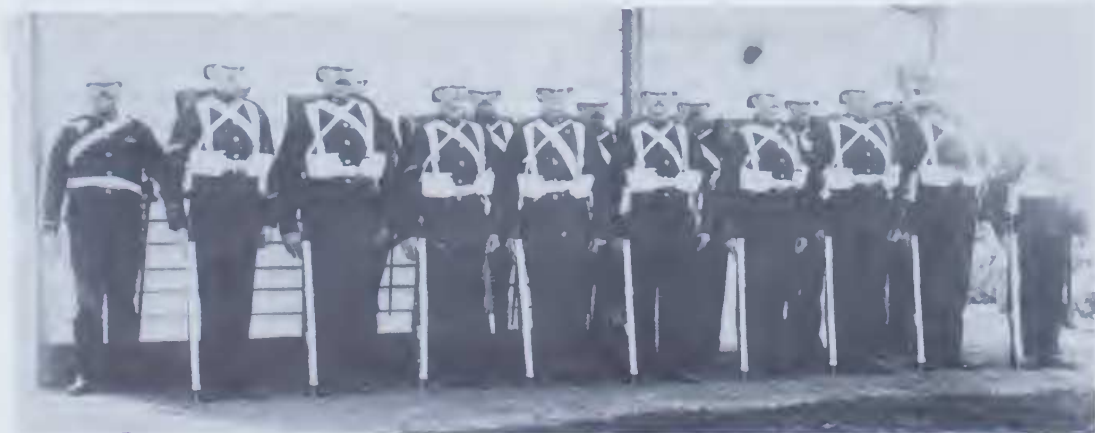


Figure 3 The Permanent Force at Albany, circa 1895. These men are armed with the Martini-Henry Artillery carbine and the Pattern 1879 Artillery sword bayonet. (Photo courtesy of Army Museum of Western Australia).



**Figure 4** Martini-Henry Artillery carbine Mark I issued in South Australia to the volunteers who formed the first gun crew to man the Permanent Force establishment at Albany, Western Australia in 1893. Carbine PMF 110, now in Western Australian Museum collection. (Photo D. Elford, Western Australian Museum).



**Figure 5** Pattern 1879 Artillery sword bayonet which accompanied the Martini-Henry Artillery carbines to Albany in 1893. Bayonet number 101, in relic condition. (Photo J. Carpenter, Western Australian Maritime Museum).

Bayonets. It is the identification of these Martini-Henry carbines and Pattern 1879 bayonets that form the focus of this study.

### THE ARMS

The arms under discussion are the Martini-Henry Artillery Carbine Mark I, which was introduced in 1879 as a short, light firearm for the use of artillery troops (see Figure 4). The Pattern 1879 Artillery sword bayonet was introduced in the same year as a long bladed sword bayonet with a sawtoothed back edge for use as a saw in cutting saplings and brush when emplacing the guns (see Figure 5). These artillery carbines and their predecessor, the cavalry carbine, were widely used in the Australian colonies, South Australia alone purchasing in excess of 800 of both types<sup>5</sup>.

A number of Martini-Henry Artillery carbines have been noted in Western Australian collections bearing South Australian ownership markings. Interestingly, these carbines also bear markings and other evidence that sets them apart from known South Australian marked examples found

in South Australian collections. In the authors estimation, these differences identify the Western Australian examples as being South Australian carbines that have been on issue in Western Australia. Three carbines have been located; one in the Western Australian Museum collection (W 175), and two in a private collection. In addition, three Pattern 1879 bayonets bearing South Australian and other markings related to these PMF carbines have been located in Western Australian collections. Two bayonets are in the Western Australian Museum collection (W 1099, T 418), and one in a private collection.

### The Carbines

An examination of the carbines confirms the following common features; all are Artillery pattern carbines fitted with a barrel band lug to take the Pattern 1879 Artillery bayonet. On all is found, in the centre of the right face of the action body (see Figure 6), the usual Enfield manufacturing details of a "crown over V.R.", (the Royal cipher), over "Enfield" over the date, denoting that the carbines were made to British

<sup>5</sup> Harris, A.F., *The Military Small Arms of South Australia 1839-1901*, A.F. Harris, Mitcham South Australia. Pp 80-90.



Figure 6 The marks and numbers on the right side of the body of PMF carbine 110. The Enfield manufacturing details and the inverted "L" mark which was inflicted in W.A. and now defaces them. The original South Australian issue marks, "broad arrow / S.A / 541" are in the top right hand corner. (Photo D. Elford, Western Australian Museum).



Figure 7 The ownership initials and stand numbers "PMF / 110" stamped into the wooden butt of a Permanent Force carbine once on issue at Albany. The faint remains of the Enfield manufacturer's roundel can be discerned to the right of the numbers. (Photo D. Elford, Western Australian Museum).

government (War Department), contract at Enfield on certain dates (in the 1880's). Below the date, on two of the three specimens<sup>6</sup>, is found the lock viewer's mark, and under this the letters and numerals "I.C.1"; the Roman numeral "I" signifying Mark I, the "C" signifying Carbine, and the Arabic numeral "1" signifying a 1st Class arm.

In the top right hand corner of the body, is found stamped the ownership marks of the colony of South Australia. These ownership marks consist of a "broad arrow over S.A", impressed at the time of manufacture, under which (in the case of these specimens), are three digit stand numbers, punched in at the time of issue in South Australia. The stand numbers are "541, 546" and "608".

In addition to the marks mentioned above, each body bears a deeply struck inverted "L" shaped indentation in the centre of the right hand side markings, with a correspondingly deep "half moon", or "C" shaped indentation on the opposite (left), face of the body. These marks were inflicted at the time of disposal from service by holding the body, right hand face down, on the corner of an anvil or some other hard square cornered object and striking the left (uppermost) face of the body with a heavy round faced hammer. The hammer blow "squeezed" the body and left the inverted "L" and the "C" shaped indentations on opposite faces of the body. This defacement served the dual purpose of "cancelling" the sovereign's ownership cipher, while simultaneously rendering the firearm inoperative. This procedure apparently resulted from a short-lived Western Australian government policy of deliberately rendering a military firearm unserviceable prior to sale or disposal to the public, probably in response to an Imperial military circular to all colonies, dated 27 August 1897, requesting that certain arms no longer required by the colonies be destroyed rather than sold.<sup>7</sup>

The carbines are also marked on the right side of the wooden butt with the usual Enfield manufacturer's roundel over the Arabic numeral "1", signifying a 1st Class arm. In addition, just above, or to the left of this roundel, is found the stamped letters "PMF" over a stand number of two

or three digits (see Figure 7). Two of the three carbine stand numbers are "107" and "110", the third specimen being in relic condition, this number is no longer discernible. The letters "PMF" signify the Permanent Military Force and the stand numbers relate to the issue of these particular carbines to the Permanent Force. It will be seen therefore that these carbines have two sets of stand numbers, one recording their initial issue to the South Australian volunteer artillery, and one recording their subsequent issue to the Permanent Force.

### The Bayonets

The three bayonets noted are all standard Pattern 1879 Artillery sword bayonets designed to accompany the Martini-Henry Artillery carbine (see Figure 5). Two of these three specimens have a small "broad arrow over S.A" mark stamped into the back of the blade tang between the leather grips, signifying ownership by the colony of South Australia<sup>8</sup>. All have a two or three digit stand number stamped into the front of the knucklebow, below the base of the blade (see Figure 8). Numbers noted are 97, 101 and 110<sup>9</sup>. These stand numbers correspond to the stand numbers stamped into the carbine's wooden butt below the letters "PMF", and signify that these bayonets are those which originally accompanied the carbines.

## DISCUSSION

In a study of the issue and marking of military firearms in colonial Western Australia<sup>10</sup> no evidence could be found to indicate that any form of carbine was ever purchased and issued to colonial volunteer artillery corps. Instead it was definitely found that only conventional long arms were on issue, and then generally only on loan from the rifle corps when needed for musketry practise. The one exception to this finding was the issue of Martini-Henry Artillery carbines to the Permanent Force artillery at Albany, but no evidence of the actual purchase of these arms by the government of Western Australia has been

<sup>6</sup> Temple B.A. and Skennerton I.D., *Treatise on the British Military Martini* Vol. III, Temple, Kilcoy Australia 1995. These markings are comprehensively described. Some examples of carbines manufactured at Enfield in 1881 are noted as lacking the lock viewer's mark and the Mark and Class indicators as in the case of one of these specimens.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Harris, p. 110. The request that arms be destroyed actually related to a special lot of converted Martini-Enfield .303 cal. rifles, rather than these obsolete .450 cal Martini-Henry carbines. However, Army General Order 296\* of 24th Dec., 1903 shows that during 1904, all of the Martini-Metford and Martini-Enfield .303 rifles and Martini-Henry .450 rifles were recalled to store. Of the handful of surviving rifles of each type examined by the author, only the Martini-Metford .303 rifles and the Martini-Henry .450 carbines have the defaced bodies while the Martini-Enfield and Martini-Henry rifles do not. The author believes that the damaged arms were sold as surplus and most were probably broken up for parts, while the Martini-Henry and Martini-Enfield arms were sold to the rifle clubs in accordance with Army General Order 26\* of 18 Feb., 1904, and thus survived undamaged. (\* Army Museum of WA Archives, General Orders 1903-1909).

<sup>8</sup> Photographing the markings of the excellently preserved bayonet specimens in the WA Museum collection was not possible, so this example in poor condition was of necessity used for illustration. This small mark on the specimen chosen was too deteriorated to reproduce, so the reader is referred to a photograph of this mark illustrated on p. 84 of *The Military Small Arms of South Australia 1839-1901*, by Harris.

<sup>9</sup> Numbers noted on the arms include 97, 101, 107, 110. It is not known why this sequence of numbers were chosen instead of numbering from 1 to 26 as one would expect for the 26 arms on issue.

<sup>10</sup> Trotter, G.B., "Military Firearms in Colonial Western Australia: their issue and marking", in *Records of the Western Australian Museum* 17: 73-116 (1995). p. 110.



**Figure 8** The knucklebow of a Pattern 1879 Artillery sword bayonet marked with the Permanent Force stand number "101". This South Australian marked bayonet accompanied the Martini-Henry Artillery carbines to Albany in 1893. (Photo J. Carpenter, Western Australian Maritime Museum).

found. Based on the knowledge that no Martini-Henry carbines were ordered by Western Australia but that the first Permanent Force gun crew was from South Australia, and that these South Australians are depicted in a contemporary photograph (Figure 3), armed with these carbines and bayonets, it was tentatively suggested that these S.A. / PMF marked carbines were of South Australian origin, brought by the first Permanent Force gun crew and left here when they departed.

Evidence which supports this interpretation includes the following considerations:

The two sites selected by the Joint Defence scheme for manning by the Permanent Force, were Thursday Island and Albany, establishing that Albany was a PMF site.

The first Permanent Force gun crew for Albany was recruited and trained in the colony of South Australia as South Australia was a member of the Joint Defence scheme whose contribution included providing a fully trained gun crew.

Records show that the Permanent Force consisted of 26 men and two senior non-commissioned officers<sup>11</sup>. Records also show that when the crew were supplied with their kit and equipments in 1893, only the two non-commissioned officers had arms provided (swords and revolvers), suggesting that the 26 men were already supplied with arms.

A contemporary photograph of this crew shows them armed with Martini-Henry Artillery carbines and Pattern 1879 Artillery bayonets, confirming that such arms were definitely on issue at Albany.

The Dominion Returns of 1904 lists 26 Martini-Henry .450 carbines and "some Pattern 1879 bayonets" in store<sup>12</sup>. The quantity of 26 carbines corresponds exactly with the 26 enlisted men of the Permanent Force at Albany. As the Returns also include Pattern 1879 bayonets, which only fit the Martini-Henry Artillery carbine, it is safe to conclude that the Martini-Henry carbines listed in the Returns are in fact Artillery carbines. As these 26 carbines are the only carbines of any type

<sup>11</sup> Battye Library, WA Statistical Register, Naval and Military Returns 1895

<sup>12</sup> Dominion Returns for Land Forces to 31st December, 1904 quoted in private correspondence by I.D. Skennerton (18th March 1992).

Table 1 Details of SA / PMF marked artillery carbines and bayonets.

Artillery Carbine	Date of Manuf.	SA Stand Number	PMF Stand Number	Body	Patt. 1879 Bayonet	Ownership Mark	PMF Stand Number
W 175	1880	541	110	Damaged	W 1099		110
Private	1880	546	107	Damaged	T 418	SA	97
Private	1881	608	?	Damaged	Private	SA	101

recorded for Western Australia they must be those on issue to the 26 Permanent Force artillerymen, and now (1904) recalled to store.

It can be seen from the foregoing archival records that there is no doubt 26 Martini-Henry Artillery carbines and Pattern 1879 Artillery bayonets were on issue to the 26 Permanent Force artillerymen at Albany and that they were still in military hands in 1904.

The question naturally arises as to how it can be demonstrated that the three carbines and bayonets located and described above are in fact the survivors of those 26 carbines and bayonets found in the archival record?

There are a number of important factors which point to these specimens being the survivors of the 26 Albany carbines.

Firstly, these specimens are all artillery carbines and the presence of the South Australian ownership mark and stand numbers together with the second, PMF, stand numbers confirms that these carbines and bayonets were standard issue South Australian owned arms until they were reissued to the Permanent Force. It is known that the Permanent Force gun crew for Albany was recruited and trained in South Australia, therefore it is probable that such a force would, if trained and armed in South Australia, be issued artillery pattern arms which bear both South Australian and PMF markings. Secondly, the letters "PMF" stand for Permanent Military Force, an exclusively South Australian title, the Western Australian equivalent being "WAPF" or "PF". However the letters "PMF" and the stand numbers have never been noted on South Australian located carbines, they have only been noted on carbines which have been located in Western Australia. Similarly the PMF stand numbers which also appear on the bayonets have only been noted on South Australian marked bayonets located in Western Australia, not on identical South Australian marked bayonets located in South Australian collections. These letters and numbers therefore, although of definite South Australian origin, appear exclusively in Western Australia, indicating that this particular PMF marked group of carbines and bayonets were only ever on issue in this colony. It should be noted also that as no WAPF or PF marked arms have been found, it is apparent that these S.A / PMF

marked carbines satisfied the small arms needs of the Permanent Force in Western Australia during the period 1893–1901. Thirdly and of utmost importance, these carbines all bear the inverted "I." and the "C" marks denoting deactivation prior to sale. This procedure is known to have occurred in Western Australia prior to the disposal of our Martini-Metford rifles, and was evidently applied to these carbines also. So far as is known, only W.A. colonial arms have been consistently found to bear these marks and certainly no South Australian arms other than these PMF specimens have been found deactivated in such a manner. These damage marks therefore are visible testimony to the link between these South Australian PMF marked arms and Western Australian issue.

CONCLUSION

The absence of a record of purchase of Martini-Henry Artillery carbines and Pattern 1879 Artillery bayonets by Western Australia to arm the Permanent Force at Albany, allied to the knowledge that these particular arms were definitely on issue there, led to a desire to locate, examine and explain the specimens described above. It is felt that an analysis of the various marks described, the analysis of the physical condition of these arms and of the archival record, establishes that these carbines and bayonets were at one time on issue to the South Australian Artillery corps and subsequently to the Permanent Force in Western Australia, after which they were disposed of here as deactivated surplus. It is felt that these three carbines and bayonets are the few survivors of the original 26 carbines and bayonets of the Permanent Force. These arms form a valuable historical link between the South Australian volunteers, Western Australia and the implementation of Australia's first Federal defence scheme. It is to be hoped that in due course the pair of swords and Webley revolvers purchased for the non-commissioned officers will be located to complete this study.